

REMARKS

In the Office Action, claims 1-14 were rejected, and claims 15 and 16 were withdrawn. Claims 2-7, 10, 11 and 13 have been amended, and claims 1, 15 and 16 have been canceled. Upon entrance of this Response, claims 2-14 will be pending in the present application. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicants have amended the specification to correct minor typographical errors, including those noted by the Examiner in paragraph 9 of the Office Action. Applicants have also replaced all occurrences of the word "barb" in the specification with "needle" as suggested by the Examiner. Applicants opted not to replace "barb" with "nozzle," in order to avoid confusion with the nozzle 44 of the misting device 40. In addition, Applicants have amended the specification such that the butt end 32 and the tip end 34 of the shaft correspond with FIGS. 1 and 4 of the drawings. No new matter has been added.

In the Office Action the Examiner subjected the claims to a restriction, stating that the application contains two distinct inventions: claims 1-14 drawn to a method and apparatus for installing a handgrip on a golf club (Invention I); and claims 15 and 16 drawn to a golf club (Invention II). Applicants elect without traverse to prosecute Invention I, claims 1-14 drawn to a method and apparatus for installing a handgrip on a golf club. Applicants have canceled claims 15 and 16, which are directed to the non-elected invention.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

In paragraphs 15 and 16 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 7 and 9-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,899,428 to Hsu. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Independent claim 7, as amended, recites an apparatus for installing a grip on a golf club shaft, the apparatus including a moveable attachment mechanism with a grip attachment device having “an inflation device with a needle adapted to be inserted into an aperture in a closed end of the grip, the needle supporting the grip on the moveable attachment mechanism and positioning an open end of the grip facing the butt end of the golf club shaft.” As best illustrated in FIG. 1, the needle 61 supports a grip on the moveable attachment mechanism and positions the grip with respect to the golf club shaft.

Hsu fails to teach or disclose an apparatus having “an inflation device with a needle adapted to be inserted into an aperture in a closed end of the grip, the needle supporting the grip ... and positioning an open end of the grip facing the butt end of the golf club shaft.” The Hsu apparatus’ inflation device, air blower 33 best illustrated in FIGS. 3 and 4, lacks a needle for insertion into an aperture in a closed end of a grip to support and position the grip on the moveable attachment mechanism. Instead, Hsu relies on a separate clamp device 32 to support a grip (handle sleeve) on the sleeve supporting and assembling unit 3. See col. 2, lines 48-50 and FIGS. 1 and 3. Since Hsu fails to disclose or suggest a grip installing apparatus with a needle that is inserted into an aperture in the closed end of a grip to support and position the grip, Applicants respectfully submit that Hsu cannot anticipate claim 7. Independent claim 7 and claims 9 and 10, which depend from claim 7, are believed to be patentable over Hsu.

Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 7 is further patentable over the combination of Hsu and U.S. Patent No. 4,043,356 to Morris et al. The addition of Morris’ inflating probe to the Hsu apparatus would not make obvious the invention of claim 7, as Hsu still relies on clamp device 32 to support and position the grip. Morris would merely facilitate directing the air into the closed end of the grip. Neither Morris nor Hsu provides motivation to

eliminate the clamp device 32 from the Hsu apparatus and use the Morris inflating probe to support and position a grip on the Hsu apparatus. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 7 and its dependent claims 9 and 10 are further patentable over the combination of Hsu and Morris.

Independent claim 11, as amended, recites an apparatus for applying a grip to a golf club shaft, the apparatus including a moveable attachment mechanism having a grip attachment device comprising a first guiding rod, a second guiding rod, an arm and an inflation device with a needle, wherein “the needle [is] attached to the arm between the attachment of the first and second guiding rods such that the needle and the first and second guiding rods extend in the first horizontal plane.” As illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 3A, the needle 61 and first and second guiding rods 57a and 57b are attached to the arm 58 with the needle located between the two guiding rods and all three (needle and two guiding rods) extending in the same horizontal plane. In addition, claim 11 recites that the needle is “adapted to be inserted into an aperture in a closed end of the grip, the needle supporting the grip on the moveable attachment mechanism and positioning an open end of the grip facing the butt end of the golf club shaft.”

Hsu fails to teach or disclose a grip attachment device that includes an arm with first and second guiding rods and a needle, “the needle attached to the arm between the attachment of the first and second guiding rods such that the needle and the first and second guiding rods extend in the first horizontal plane.” The Examiner states that Hsu discloses “a first guiding rod (31), a second guiding rod (31), an arm (Transverse vertical attachment to said base blocks, which connects at bottom, 37 in Figure 3 and Figure 4) and an inflation device with a barb (311).” The guiding rods 31 and barb 311, however, do not extend in a horizontal plane and therefore Hsu does not anticipate independent claim 11.

Hsu further fails to disclose or suggest a needle that is “adapted to be inserted into an aperture in a closed end of the grip, the needle supporting the grip on the moveable attachment mechanism and positioning an open end of the grip facing the butt end of the golf club shaft.” As discussed above with respect to independent claim 7, the Hsu air blower 33 lacks an needle for insertion into an aperture in a closed end of a grip to support and position the grip, relying instead on the separate clamp device 32. For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 11 and claim 12, which depends therefrom, are patentable over Hsu.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

In paragraphs 18-20 the Examiner rejected claims 1-5 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hsu in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,629,087 to Hartman et al. In paragraphs 21-25 the Examiner rejected claims 6, 13 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable in over Hsu in view of Hartman and Morris. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Independent claim 1 has been canceled, and dependent claims 2-5 have been amended to depend from independent claim 6. Claim 6, as amended, recites a process for installing a grip on a golf club shaft, the process including “mounting the grip on an inflation device of a moveable attachment mechanism, the inflation device including a needle that is inserted into an aperture in a closed end of the grip to support the grip and position the grip in a horizontal plane with the golf club shaft.” As discussed above, Hsu fails to disclose inserting a needle into an aperture in a closed end of a grip to support and position the grip with respect to a golf club shaft. Hsu uses the clamp device 32 to support and position a grip, while air blower 33 blows air into the rear end of the grip. The combination of Hsu with Hartman and Morris does not make obvious the invention of claim 6. Hartman discloses a water activated grip tape, while Morris discloses an

inflating probe. There is no motivation in Hsu, Hartman or Morris to dispense with Hsu's grip clamp device and rely on the Morris inflating probe to support and position a grip with respect to a golf club shaft. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 6 and its dependent claims 2-5 are patentable over Hsu, Hartman and Morris.

Claim 8 depends from claim 7, and claims 13 and 14 depend from claim 11. Claims 7 and 11 are discussed above and believed to be patentable over Hsu. The addition of Hartman and Morris fails to make up for the deficiencies of Hsu with respect to claims 7 and 11, as the combination of the three references fails to suggest either a needle adapted to be inserted into an aperture in a closed end of a grip to support and position the grip (claims 7 and 11) or a needle attached to an arm between the attachment of first and second guiding rods such that the needle and the guiding rods extend in a horizontal plane (claim 11). Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 8, 13 and 14 are patentable over the combination of Hsu, Hartman and Morris.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that each of the outstanding rejections has been overcome and that the pending claims are in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone Applicants' Attorney, if such would advance the prosecution of this case.

Respectfully submitted,

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